Hit embryonic stem cell research, hurt iPS research too

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Those of you who follow this space have read our opinions on embryonic vs. adult vs. reprogrammed iPS cells. For those of you who don't watch this space, here's our opinion in a nutshell: There is no "vs." All types of stem cells could be therapeutically valuable, and what we learn in one cell type often directly translates to discoveries in another cell type.

A paper coming out tomorrow in *Cell* supports that opinion. Christopher Scott at Stanford University and colleagues at the Mayo Clinic and the University of Michigan analyzed more than 2,000 papers published since 2007, when human iPS cells were first reported. According to a Stanford press release:

> [The team] found that the iPS field is dominated by well-established, senior hES cell researchers. Many of these researchers are publishing studies that directly compare hES cells with iPS cells, rather than focusing exclusively on one cell type.

However, stem cell scientists are not abandoning hES cells in favor of iPS cells. In 2008, only three of the 15 iPS cell papers (5 percent) published also reported hES cell results; in 2010, 98 of the 158 iPS cell papers (about 26 percent) did so.
The work is especially important given an unresolved lawsuit that temporarily suspended federal funding for embryonic stem cell research last fall.

Stanford writes:

> "If federal funding stops for human embryonic stem cell research, it would have a serious negative impact on iPS cell research," said Stanford bioethicist Christopher Scott, citing a "false dichotomy" between the cell types. "We may never be able to choose between iPS and ES cell research because we don't know which type of cell will be best for eventual therapies."

A.A.

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